



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/527,002	08/05/2005	Lasad Jaouani	Seric 5972	9424
7590		11/08/2007	EXAMINER	
Air Liquide Intellectual Property Department Suite 1800 2700 Post Oak Boulevard Houston, TX 77056			DOERRLER, WILLIAM CHARLES	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3744	
			MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
			11/08/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/527,002	JAOUANI ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	William C. Doerrler	3744

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on _____.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 13-30 is/are pending in the application.
 - 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 13-30 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on 04 March 2005 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date 3-4-2005, 8-5-2005.
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Priority

Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 22,29 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In claim 22, further defining the “liquefied air” does not further limit the claim, since liquefied air is only one possibility in claim 17. Applicant should first positively claim that the reflux is liquefied air. In claim 29, it is unclear what the “fourth oxygen rich stream” is referring to. Claim 30 depends from claim 29, so it is unclear by its dependency.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein

Art Unit: 3744

were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 13-21 and 23-30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schwenk (6,612,129) in view of Agrawal et al (5,067,976). Schwenk discloses applicants' basic inventive concept, an air separation system and method in which the incoming air 44 is fed to a medium pressure column 2. A nitrogen enriched stream 9 is fed to a low pressure column 3 through line 11. An intermediate stream 45 is also removed from the central portion of the medium pressure column and sent to the low pressure column. An oxygen enriched stream 13 is removed from the medium pressure column and sent through line 16 to auxiliary column 24 which produces an oxygen stream 30 with increased krypton and xenon. Schwenk does not show using a liquid reflux stream of at least 78% nitrogen in the auxiliary column. Agrawal et al shows in line 33 of column 4, that using liquid nitrogen in a column for producing a liquid oxygen stream with elevated levels of krypton and xenon to be known in the art. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicants' invention to modify the separation system of Schwenk by using a liquid nitrogen reflux for the auxiliary column to improve the yield of liquid oxygen enriched in krypton and xenon. In regard to claims 14,20,26,29 and 30, Official Notice is taken that is well known to vaporize liquid oxygen leaving the system to provide gaseous oxygen

Art Unit: 3744

where it is needed while reducing the refrigeration required for the process by cooling a process stream to provide the heat required for the vaporization. It is noted that the liquefied oxygen in Schwenk is pressurized using pumps 36 and 42. In regard to the purification columns of claims 16 and 28, note that Agrawal et al uses column 51 to purify a krypton/xenon enriched stream from the unnumbered raw krypton/xenon column. In regard to claim 18, it is noted that the feed of auxiliary column of Schwenk is heated using heat from an argon column (heat exchanger 17), this is seen as supplying heat to the auxiliary column. In regard to claim 24, It is noted that oxygen is removed from the low pressure column of Shwenk, but the amount is not specified. It is considered well within the scope of the ordinary practitioner to ensure that the proper amount is removed to ensure optimum performance of the separation system.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Cheung, LaClair and Schlitt show krypton/xenon concentration systems.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to William C. Doerrler whose telephone number is (571) 272-4807. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 6:30-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Cheryl Tyler can be reached on (571) 272-4834. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 3744

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.



William C. Doerrler
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3744

WCD